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SUBJECT: DECEMBER 18 MFA PRESS BRIEFING: SOMALI PIRACY, HU JIA, 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF REFORM

11. Key points at the December 18 MFA press briefing:

-- China has begun preparations to send naval vessels to the Gulf of Aden.

-- China "expresses sincere thanks" to the Malaysian Government for its assistance in the rescue of the Chinese ship captured by pirates on December 17.

-- China will continue to develop "socialism with Chinese characteristics" in spite of the EU Parliament's efforts to award Hu Jia with the Sakharov Prize.

-- President Hu Jintao's speech on the 30th anniversary of reform was "very long" and will "take time to digest."

Rescue of Chinese Freighter and Somali Piracy  
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12. China "has begun preparations" to send PLA Naval vessels to the waters off Somalia, said MFA spokesman Liu Jianchao at the December 18 regular press briefing. Liu said that in recent years "rampant piracy" in the Gulf of Aden has created "a threat to international navigation, trade and naval security." Liu listed statistics on piracy off the coast of Somalia and noted that one Chinese ship and eighteen people remain in the custody of pirates. China "has taken this action [to send ships] in accordance with Article 7 of the UN Charter," said Liu adding that the Government of Somalia "welcomes" the decision. China made the decision to send the ships because it supports "stronger international cooperation" to counter piracy, said Liu.

13. Asked for details of the capture and rescue of a Chinese vessel yesterday, Liu said that nine pirates boarded a Chinese ship on December 17. The Chinese Government "took the matter seriously" and "relevant authorities arranged for a rescue." The Chinese Government "sent a distress message to the International Maritime Bureau" after which, the "Malaysian anti-piracy center sent an armed helicopter, a warship and another helicopter to the rescue." Thanks to their assistance, "the pirates were fended off." China "expresses sincere thanks" to Malaysia for its work in rescuing the Chinese crew, adding that the action "should serve as a good example" of how to deal with pirates. (NOTE: Post notes that, although the International Maritime Bureau Piracy Center is in Kuala Lumpur, the naval vessels that actually rescued the Chinese freighter were part of a multi-national group. END NOTE.)

The Sakharov Prize to Hu Jia  
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14. The European Union Parliament is "already aware" of China's position on Hu Jia's being awarded the Sakharov Prize, said Liu. "Whatever intentions the European Union may have," said Liu, China will continue to develop "socialism with Chinese characteristics" and run China "according to law."

### 30th Anniversary of Reform

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15. Liu said that he "listened hard" to Hu Jintao's speech commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of reform. The speech was "very long," said Liu, and will "take time to digest."

### Nobel Prize Corruption

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16. The spokesman had "no knowledge of" reports that officials on the Nobel Prize committee have taken trips to China paid for by the Chinese Government.